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Hard-Core Communists Encircle Castro's Regime

(Third exclusive story in a series from the western hemisphere's No. 1 hot spot.)

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HAVANA — Hard-core Communists encircle Fidel Castro's regime like sharks around flounder but it appears too early to say they have won control of Cuba. Things are moving their way. Castro's plan for "complete state capitalism" is a fuzzy carbon of the Russian blueprint. Men trained in Moscow have penetrated Castro's inner councils with ease and their strength is said to grow day by day.

Yet the U. S. State Department and Central Intelligence Agency still maintain that Fidel himself has never carried a Communist card and cannot yet be considered a puppet of the Red apparatus.

His younger brother Raul, Cuba's defense minister, has shown

strong Communist leanings. Nudging him farther left, it is said, is a shadowy and influential figure named Mamiro Valdes who stands at Raul's elbow as chief of intelligence and is listed as a Communist in U. S. files.

Raul is listed as Communist-prone but, like his brother, not a card carrier.

Even Maj. Ernesto (Che) Guevara, often labeled Cuba's No. 1 Red, is not viewed by our State Department as a Communist of top importance.

Guevara, stormy revolutionary who practiced medicine before he became a guerrilla, wields great power today as president of the National Bank of Cuba.

But his outbursts do not fit the cool cunning of the true Kremlin agent. U. S. experts consider him a front man manipulated by craftier brains behind.

"We would like to know more

about who pulls Guevara's strings," I was told.

Cuba's top five Communists were named in this order: Carlos Rafael Rodriguez, Juan Marinello, Blas Roca, Lazaro Pena, Joaquin Ordoqui.

Rodriguez and Marinello are secretary general and president respectively of the PSP (Popular Socialist Party); the Communist Party. All five have lived in Moscow and had Kremlin training.

The five are the hard-core operatives who will leap into headlines if orders come for an all-out Communist coup in Cuba; it is said.

They move today in Cuba's highest circles but work out of the limelight. That their directions come from Russia was termed "beyond any doubt."

Week by week the Cuban Communists are reported extending their influence, quietly. They converse with government officials.

They feed propaganda into their Cuban newspaper and radio outlets.

They concentrate on strengthening their hand in labor groups, where penetration has been effective, and on building PSP units throughout the island. Party membership today is estimated between 18,000 and 21,000.

Background roles seem likely to suit Cuba's key Communists, as long as Fidel Castro plays their cards for them.

Castro's head-over-heels plunge into "state capitalism," his nationwide seizures of property, his bombastic diatribes against the United States, his sugar deal with Moscow and declarations of friendship for Russia could not have been mapped better by the Kremlin itself.

As for Castro's personal relationship with Russia, here are recent statements by Gen. C. P. Cabell, deputy director of the U. S. Central Intelligence Agency, before a Senate subcommittee:

"Our conclusion... is that Fidel Castro is not a Communist; however, he is certainly not anti-Communist. His extreme policies, including confiscation of private property, lead him to take positions and make statements such as violent anti-U. S. outbursts which are extremely useful to international Communism and are being exploited by the Communists to the maximum extent."

However, Cabell testified: "It is questionable whether the Communists desire to recruit Castro into the Communist Party, that they could do so if they wished, or that he would be susceptible to Communist discipline if he joined."